

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0805

WWW.COONS.SENATE.GOV
127A RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5042

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Dear Friends,

Like many Delaware parents, I was surprised when my kids came home from school asking questions about an African warlord named Joseph Kony and his army of child soldiers, the LRA, or Lord's Resistance Army. They and their friends had seen a 30-minute video made by a group called "Invisible Children" designed to bring global pressure down on Kony and see him brought to justice.

Among my responsibilities in the Senate is chairing the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs, so I have closely monitored Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army for some time. It's been decades since we've seen such intense focus from young Americans on a humanitarian situation in Africa, making this moment an important one for supporting our kids' interest. I thought it might be helpful to provide you a little context and background to help you engage with your kids on the issue.

Without a doubt, Joseph Kony is a very bad man. He is a war criminal who has committed crimes against humanity. For 25 years, Kony, his top lieutenants, and other members of the Lord's Resistance Army have burned a path of destruction through Uganda and its neighbors, kidnapping young boys to take up arms against their communities. Young girls are turned into sex slaves, and children have been forced to murder their own parents.

We in the U.S. have a great deal of power — military, diplomatic, and developmental — that we use to meet the many foreign policy challenges. The Kony 2012 campaign urges us to bring that power to bear on a humanitarian challenge: protecting innocent civilians from Kony's wrath and helping to end the crimes of the Lord's Resistance Army by capturing Joseph Kony and bringing him before the International Criminal Court.

Central Africa is very big, very poor, very rugged, and largely remote. It lacks effective central governments, and is a place where too many bad things have happened and continue to happen, both with and without the influence of the LRA. The solution is not for the United States to impose its presence in the region, but to support African solutions to this and many other problems in the region. Ugandan, Congolese, Sudanese, and other troops should protect their people and continue to lead the effort to capture Kony — with our active help and support — and African militaries are actively leading and partnering with us in the recovery effort for LRA orphans and distressed communities.

Backed by authorization from a strongly supportive and bipartisan Congress, President Obama sent 100 U.S. military advisors to the region last fall to support regional efforts to find Kony and aid LRA-affected communities.

The worst of the crimes the LRA has committed — turning young boys into violent soldiers, using sexual violence as a tool of war, and randomly killing innocent civilians — happen far too frequently throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and other countries in the region. The LRA is not alone in using these tactics, and should not be alone in receiving our sustained focus. The entire region needs and deserves our ongoing engagement.

That's the message I hope comes out of the Kony 2012 campaign. Parents, teachers, faith groups, non-profits, and government leaders have an opportunity to work together to support these young Delawareans' idealism and concern. The young people who have rallied behind the effort to capture Joseph Kony have our attention, our support, and our partnership.

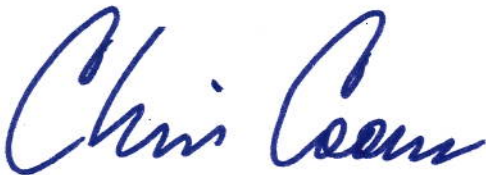
Let me point you to a few resources we've posted to my website:

- A brief video for young Delawareans on what the U.S. is doing to help capture Joseph Kony, and what they can do to help: <http://coons.senate.gov/kony/>
- A written set of commonly asked questions and answers about Kony, U.S. efforts to capture him, the situation in Uganda and central Africa, and what Delawareans can do: <http://coons.senate.gov/kony/questions/>
- A report from the Congressional Research Service going into great depth about Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army: <http://coons.senate.gov/kony/report/>
- Links to resources for engaging and learning more in Delaware and nationally: <http://coons.senate.gov/kony/>

In the weeks building up to the Kony 2012 campaign's April 20 day of action, we'll post additional content – including information about a resolution on the LRA I will soon introduce in the Senate – to help Delawareans amplify their voices and engage others across the nation, support humanitarian efforts in Africa, and save lives.

As always, I'm happy to help and answer any other questions you have. Please call my office at 573-6345 or 202-224-5042.

Yours,



Chris Coons
U.S. Senator